

## SHANKLAND, THOMAS (1858 - 1927), bibliophile and historian

**Name:** Thomas Shankland  
**Date of birth:** 1858  
**Date of death:** 1927  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** bibliophile and historian  
**Area of activity:** History and Culture; Literature and Writing; Scholarship and Languages  
**Author:** Thomas Richards

He was born in Llanginning parish, Carmarthenshire, 14 October 1858, and attended Pwll-trap school; by 1876 he was at Bala working as a shoemaker, and coming into contact with the great men of the place like principals **Lewis Edwards** and **Michael D. Jones**. In 1879 he was baptised by immersion; in 1882 he commenced preaching with the Baptists, and then went for a period to S. Clears grammar school; in 1885 he was accepted as a student at Llangollen college, but (by a new arrangement) he and two others were allowed to enter the new University College at Bangor; at the end of his first year he was among the prizemen. From 1888 to 1891 he was minister at Mold, from 1891 to 1904 at Rhyl. During his stay at Bangor he was a frequent visitor to Puffin Island, and for a time there was a real danger of his being lost in the world of birds, insects, molluscs, and fishes. Perhaps the great turning point of his life was his visit (October 1900) to the old home of **Joshua Thomas** the historian at Leominster, and examining the manuscripts that still remained there. But before that, in 1898-9, four articles of his had appeared in *Seren Cymru* on **Morgan John Rhys**; then came three articles in *Cymru* for 1902 on the beginnings of the Sunday School in the Principality; his most substantial work was a series of sixteen articles in *Seren Gomer* (September 1900 - January 1904) in review of *Diwygwyrr Cymru* by **Beriah Evans**, articles that revealed the riches of the Lambeth Palace Library, and proclaimed that a scientific researcher of the first rank had appeared. In 1904 he was invited to come to Bangor to reorganise the Welsh library at the University College; in 1905 he started on the work of classifying and arranging, of tramping the country in search of rare books. He was a bibliophile by instinct; his eyes and ears were all alert in a search; he knew of the ancient homes of rarities, their descent, and their probable new homes; he was a connoisseur of edition after edition; and he brought to the science of capture knowledge, discretion, and the healthy humour of a buoyant temperament. He was great in the world of books, greater in that of periodicals, with his unerring intuition for finding missing numbers; his great delight was to see them bound in long series to fill out the Welsh Research Room - his outstanding contribution to the treasures of the U.C.N.W. library. All this reorganisation was only one aspect of his work: his great store of knowledge was at the service of professors, students, and country-folk; there was no limit to his kindness and generosity.

A good proportion of this generosity was given to Baptist causes: he was a live member of their College committee at Bangor and of the Arfon Association; sixty articles of his appeared in *Seren Cymru*; he was editor of *Seren Gomer*, 1905-6, and editor of the *Trafodion* of the Historical Society from the time it was founded till his breakdown in 1925. He contributed to the *Trafodion* some important articles, especially the research on **John Miles** and on the development of periodical literature in Wales; he edited also several reprints, that of the *Antidote* in 1904, parts of Harl. MS. 6898 in 1908-9, and *Llythyrau Cymanfa, 1760-5*, in 1910. Among his best work was chapter x (on the early works of **Morgan John Rhys**) contributed to the *Cofiant* by **Dr. J. T. Griffith**, and chapter xxxvi on the age of **John Richard Jones**, written for the *Cofiant* by **David Williams**. Shankland's sympathies, however, were catholic and comprehensive, not in any way bound in by the fences of denominations, as witness his *Cofiadur* article on **Evan Roberts** of Llanbadarn, his article on **Stephen Hughes** in the *Beirniad*, his articles on the Quaker **John ap John** in *Cymru*, besides his many articles on the authorship of hymns and the story of hymn-tunes, regardless of denomination. He insisted on doing full justice to the efforts of the Church of England in the field of education in the days before the Methodist revival, in his exhaustive article on **Sir John Philipps** and the charity schools in *The Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* for 1904-5. He was with the foremost in founding 'Cymdeithas Llawysgrifau Bangor' in 1907, and acted as its secretary during the whole of its existence. In view of his tireless activity, his great output of articles, his triumphs as bibliophile and his unstinted generosity, he was awarded, in 1917, the degree of M.A. honoris causa by the University of Wales. In November of the same year he lost his only son in the battle of Bourlon Wood. Early in 1925 he himself was struck down by paralysis, and later by several more attacks. He died on 20 February 1927. He was a fine example of extensive scholarship enshrined in a large humanity.

### Author

**Thomas Richards**, (1878 - 1962)

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**Published date:** 1959

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Richards, T., (1959). SHANKLAND, THOMAS (1858 - 1927), bibliophile and historian. *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. Retrieved 11 Nov 2024, from <https://biography.wales/article/s-SHAN-THO-1858>

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